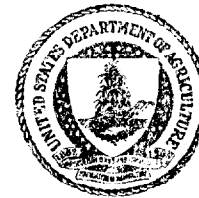


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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OFFICE OF INFORMATION PRESS SERVICE



WASHINGTON, D. C.

Release - Immediate.

March 7, 1932.

NATIVE BIRDS USEFUL ON FARMS

Protection of birds should be almost instinctive on the part of the farmer, advises the Bureau of Biological Survey, United States Department of Agriculture, in Farmers' Bulletin 1682-F, "Usefulness of Birds on the Farm," ^{by} W. L. McAtee, in charge of the bureau's division of food habits research. "Hardly an agricultural pest exists," says the author, "but has many effective bird enemies."

When one kind of insect becomes so numerous in a region as to threaten the wholesale destruction of vegetation, birds, as a rule, congregate there and live largely on the plague insects. In Utah during an alfalfa weevil outbreak, the bulletin records that, among other instances, Biological Survey scientists found 45 species of birds attacking the pest. One killdeer's stomach examined in this investigation contained 383 individual weevils, and the contents of a Brewer's blackbird's stomach showed that the bird had eaten 442 weevils, constituting 96 per cent of its food.

The every-day services of birds in consuming insects of all kinds and holding back the threatening tide of insect life, says the bulletin, are probably of even greater significance than their emergency help. A list published in the bulletin shows, among others, that the cotton-boll weevil has 66 bird enemies, the gypsy moth 46, the army worm 43, leaf hoppers 175, the potato beetle 34, and wireworms 205.

Discussing the bird population of the United States, the author points out not only the peculiar usefulness of various kinds of birds but also the harm that the birds may do under certain circumstances. Material increase in the number of birds, he concludes, is admittedly a two-sided problem, but there is no doubt that the majority of birds are more beneficial than injurious, and that to increasing their numbers is beneficial.

Farmers' Bulletin 1682-F may be obtained free on request to the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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